

Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ADP-00 SS-15 NSC-10 L-03 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 AID-20 IGA-02 MC-02 RSR-01 /107 W

----- 013392

R 031200Z AUG 73 ZFG

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9863

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO CINCPAC

CNO

COMIDEASTFOR

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1980

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, CE

SUBJ: GSL APPROACH TO PURCHASE SHIP FOR SRI LANKA NAVY

REF COLOMBO 1202 STATE 99820

1. SUMMARY: MDFA HAS NOW APPROACHED US OFFICIALLY WITH REQUEST FOR OFFER OF SHIP TO BE PURCHASED FOR SRI LANKA NAVY.END SUMMARY.

2. MDFA DIRECTOR WEST AFFAIRS BALASUBRAMANIAM ASKED DCM TO COME TO FOREIGN MINISTRY AUG 3 SO HE COULD MAKE "OFFICIAL" WHAT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED "UNOFFICIALLY" BETWEEN SLN AND DEFENSE ATTACHE CONCERNING GSL DESIRE BUY NAVAL SHIP. HE PRESENTED AIDE-MEMOIRE, FIRST TWO PARAGRAPHS OF WHICH ARE AS FOLLOWS:

3. "MDFA IS INTERESTED IN PURCHASE OF SMALL, ECONOMICAL, UTILITY
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TYPE LIGHTLY ARMED FRIGATE/OCEAN/ESCORT/HIGH ENDURANCE CORVETTE/

LARGE PATROL BOAT TO REPLACE SLNS GAJABAHU OF FORMER CANADIAN RIVER CLASS. MINISTRY IS ALSO INTERESED IN PURCHASE OF FULL OUTFIL OF SPARE PARTS, STORES, AMMUNITION, EQUIPMENT, ETC. COST OF VESSEL AND EXTRAS WILL BE MET ON DEFERRED PAYMENT BASIS.

"VESSELL REFERRED TO ABOVE SHOULD BE IN FULLY OPERATIONAL CONDITION WITH LIMITED BUT ALL-ROUND ANTI-AIRCRAFT, ANTI-SHIP, AND ANTI-SUBMARINE CAPABILITY. IT SHOULD HAVE CRUISING RANGE COMMITMENT OF 6,500 TO 8,000 MILES AT SPEEDS OF 10 TO 12 KNOTS, TWIN SCREWS, PREFERABLY STEAM PROPULSION TO PRODUCE MAXIMUM SPEED IN RANGE OF 22 TO 28 KNOTS AND COMPLEMENT OF ABOUT 120 TO 180 OFFICERS AND MEN. IT SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF PERFORMING PATROL OPERATIONS, PROTECTION OF SHIPPING, SURVEILLANCE, SUPPORT MISSIONS AND BE ADAPTABLE AS TRAINING SHIP FOR JUNIOR OFFICERS AND SAILIRS."

4. REST OF AIDE-MEMOIRE GIVES DETAILED SPECIFICATIONS. COPIES BEING POUCHED.

5. BALASUBRAMANIAM STATED APPROACH BEING MADE ONLY TO TWO COUNTRIES, US AND UK, BECAUSE SRI LANKA NAVY WANTED TO STICK WITH EQUIPMENT WITH WHICH IT WAS FAMILIAR. HE CITED MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS WITH PRC GUNBOATS AS CASE IN POINT.

6. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, BALASUBRAMANIAM ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOVIETS HAD OFFERED TO PROVIDE SHIP AND ADDED THAT GSL HAD ASKED THEM TO BRING ONE TO COLOMBO FOR INSPECTION, WHICH SOVIETS AGREED TO DO ON NEXT VISIT (WE UNDERSTAND IN SEPT). BALASUBRAMANIAM SOUGHT TO AVOID IMPLICATION THAT REQUEST TO US WAS IN ANY WAY LINKED TO SOVIET OFFER, BUT AT OTHER POINTS IN CONVERSATION HE REFERRED TO APPARENT SOVIET EFFORT TO INCREASE USSR PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN BY MEANS OF SRI LANKA, MENTIONING GAMBITS ON FISHERIES, CULTURAL CENTERS, "AND NOW A SHIP".

7. TO ANOTHER QUESTION, BALASUBRAMANIAM SAID SL NAVY WANTED SHIP AS REPLACEMENT FOR AND NOT AS ADDITION TO GAJABAHU, WHICH WAS "TOO OLD" FOR OVERHAUL. (DATT HAD LEARNED FROM SL NAVY THT PAKISTANI OFFER REPORTED COLOMBO 1202 HAD BEEN SHELVED.)

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8. ON PRICE, BALASUBRAMANIAM SAID FIGURE WA MATTER FOR NEGOTIATION. GSL WOULD HAVE TO PAY IN INSTALLMENTS ANDHOPED SELLER WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT SRI LANKA'S SERIOUS FOREIGN EXCHANGE SITUATION. STATING HE WAS GOING BEYOND HIS INSTRUCTIONS, HE SUGGESTED SELLER MIGHT WORK THINGS OUT SO THAT "NOT ALL" OF PURCHASE PRICE WOULD HAVE TO BE PAID IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE.

9. DCM SAID GSL APPROACH WOULD BE REPORTED TO WASHINGTON AND WE WOULD BE BACK IN TOUCH IN DUE COURSE.

10. COMMENT: EMBASSY'S RECOMMENDATION ON MATTER WILL BE TRANSMITTED AFTER WE RECEIVE INFO REQUESTED IN COLOMBO 1202 ON AVAILABILITY, PRICE AND CREDIT. WE WOULD APPRECIATE THIS INFO SOONEST.
VAN HOLLEN

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NNN

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